



CONGRESSIONAL BUDGET OFFICE COST ESTIMATE

March 18, 2003

S. 212

High Plains Aquifer Hydrogeologic Characterization, Mapping, and Modeling Act

*As ordered reported by the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
on March 12, 2003*

SUMMARY

S. 212 would establish a program within the Department of the Interior to map and study the high plains aquifer, a groundwater reserve that serves Colorado, Kansas, Nebraska, New Mexico, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Texas, and Wyoming. The U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) would coordinate the program and would provide grants and technical assistance to those eight states (or local agencies and educational institutions) for projects that address groundwater issues. For fiscal years 2003 through 2011, the bill would authorize the appropriation of whatever amounts are necessary for federal projects, technical assistance, and state grants.

Assuming appropriation of the amounts necessary to carry out the high plains aquifer program, CBO estimates that implementing S. 212 would cost about \$1 million in fiscal year 2003 and \$44 million over the 2003-2008 period. (Over the 2003-2013 period, we estimate that implementing the bill would cost \$90 million.) Enacting the bill would not affect direct spending or revenues.

S. 212 contains no intergovernmental or private-sector mandates as defined in the Unfunded Mandates Reform Act (UMRA). Any costs that states incur as a result of participating in the program would be voluntary.

ESTIMATED COST TO THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

The estimated budgetary impact of S. 212 is shown in the following table. The projects authorized by the bill would constitute a new program in the federal budget; no funding was provided for this purpose for fiscal year 2003. The costs of this legislation fall within budget function 300 (natural resources and environment).

	By Fiscal Year, in Millions of Dollars					
	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
CHANGES IN SPENDING SUBJECT TO APPROPRIATION						
Estimated Authorization Level	10	10	10	10	10	10
Estimated Outlays	1	5	8	10	10	10

BASIS OF ESTIMATE

For this estimate CBO assumes that S. 212 will be enacted during fiscal year 2003 and that the amounts estimated to be necessary to carry out the high plains aquifer program are appropriated for each year. The estimated authorization level of \$10 million is based on information provided by the Department of the Interior regarding similar legislation and USGS activities. As provided in the bill, one-half of that amount would be used for federal activities (primarily for coordination, data integration, and technical assistance). The remaining \$5 million would be awarded to the eight states (or their subdivisions or educational institutions) for hydrogeologic characterization, mapping, modeling, and monitoring projects. Estimated outlays are based on historical spending patterns for similar federal-state programs.

INTERGOVERNMENTAL AND PRIVATE-SECTOR IMPACT

S. 212 contains no intergovernmental or private-sector mandates as defined in UMRA. The bill would authorize grants to eight states if they choose to participate in this program. Any costs that states incur as a result of participating in the program would be voluntary.

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